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ABSTRACT

Intended for use with college students, this booklet contains a traditional Hupa story (in Hupa and English) followed by information to aid in a critical literary analysis of the story and topics for student discussion. The introduction explains that "Origin of Fire"--first written down by P.E. Goddard in 1902 and still told by contemporary Hupas--relates how the chief divinity of the Hupa created fire. The brief story is presented in Hupa and English on facing pages which are illustrated with pen and ink drawings. Explanatory material following the story contrasts western and native story structure and social values, pointing out that native stories use visual imagery as a unifying device, do not necessarily build up to a climax, and may shift tense and point of view without warning. Discussion questions are listed and a retelling of the story maintaining its underlying syntactic sequence is suggested as a culminating activity. (JHZ)

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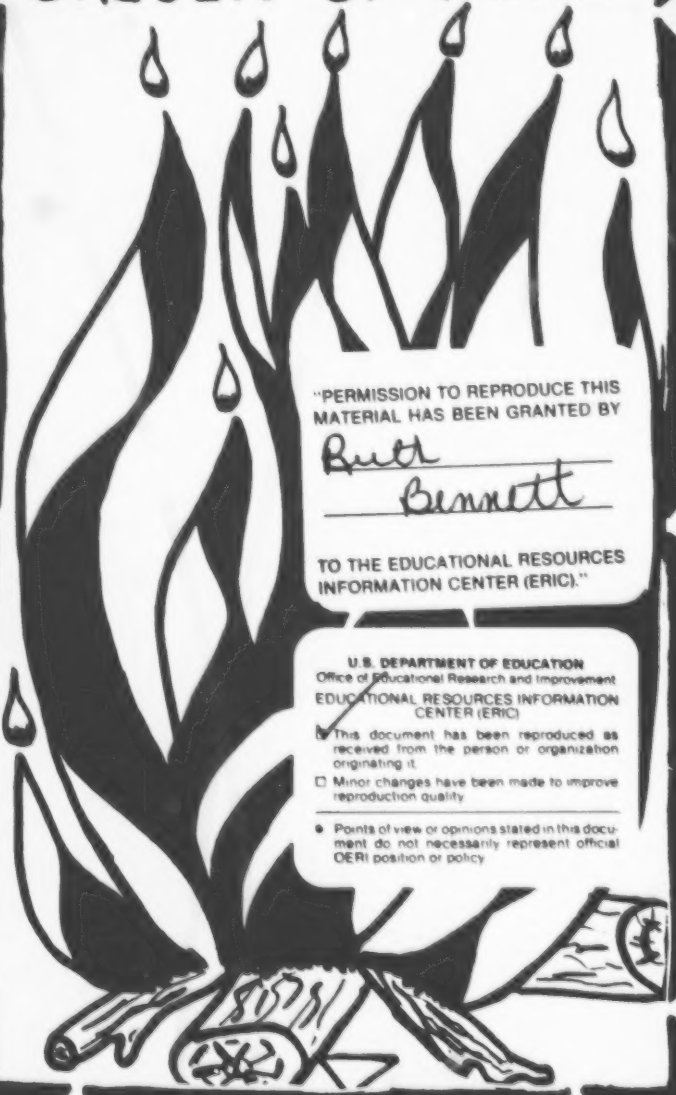
ORIGIN OF FIRE



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Origin of Fire is a traditional Hupa story first written down by P. E. Goddard in 1902. Goddard's text was told in Hupa by a Hupa Indian male named McCann. The story relates how Y*-MON-TO-WH*N-XO-YON, the chief divinity of the Hupa, created fire. The story is still told by contemporary Hupas; the version in the present text was told in 1981 by Alice Pratt, Hupa medicine woman, and written down by Ruth Bennett.

Ruth Bennett
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March, 1981

ᎩᏍ-MON-O-KYO-WᏍN-xG-YON
CᎠ-ᏰLE-WᏍᏁ-X̄Ꭰ
X̄Ꭰ-LOH̄
YO-ᏍC-DOTC
HᏯ-WᏍᏰ-CᎠ-MᏍᏰ

ᏰLO'

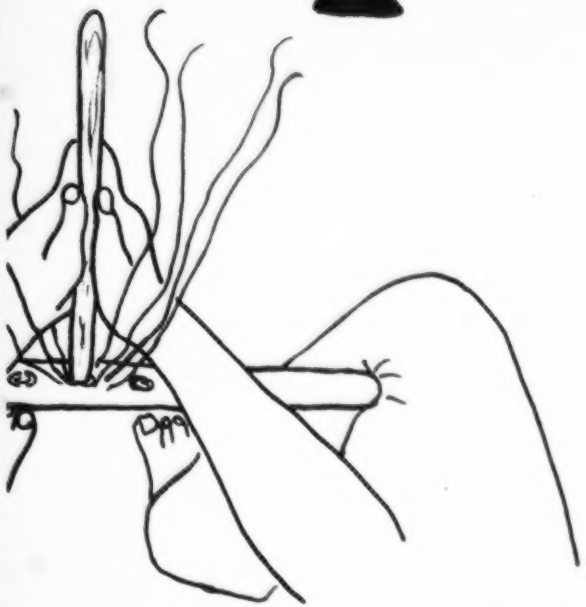
THE OLD-MAN-ACROSS-THE-OCEAN
YOU RUB IT TOGETHER
WILLOW ROOT
YOU WHITTLE IT
THE DRY PART

HΔ-YOB-JH-TEB-WHC
KI-YE HΔ-YOB
WU'-KH-NEC-WHB
AWH-LO-TUX

YOU BORE THE HOLES
AND THEN AGAIN
HE MADE THE HOLE
BETWEEN HIS HANDS

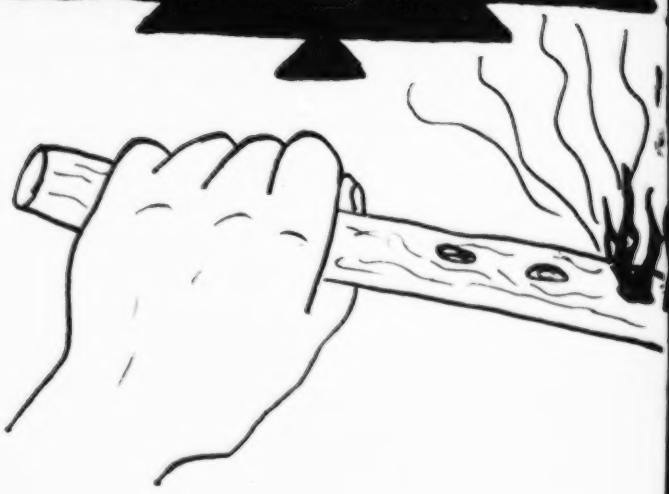
TWO

HΔ-YOB JΩN-DEC·NE
BLHT-YΔ-OB-KH-TE
HΔ-YOB
YΔ-OB-KHT
TOX

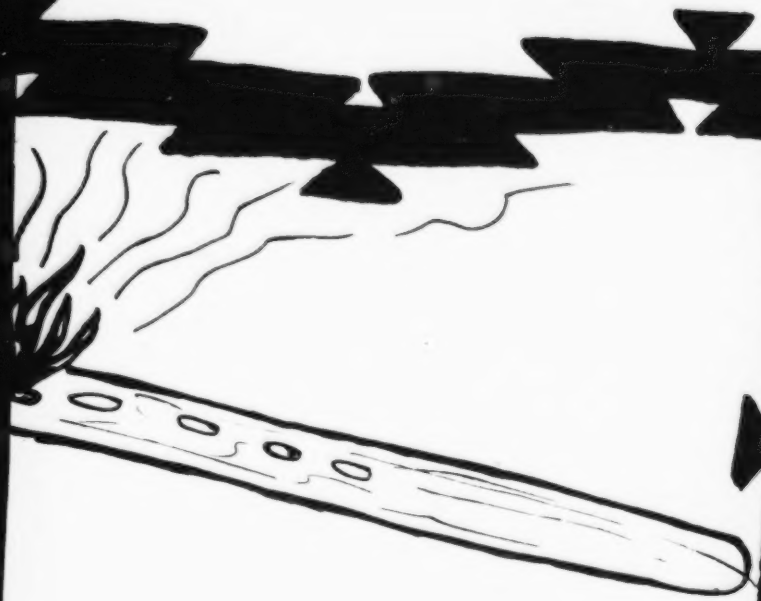


AND THEN HE THOUGHT
THERE WILL BE SMOKE
AND THEN
HE MADE THE SMOKE

THREE



HΔ-YOΞ
JΔ-NΨΞ-KΨT
HΔ-YOΞ
TΔ-LΨT
DΔ-JENZ XO-O-DEN
HΔ-YO-NΩN-DΨK



AND THEN
THE SMOKE ROLLED OUT
AND THEN
THE FIRE CAME OUT
IT HAPPENS THAT WAY NOW
THAT'S THE END

FOUR

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the lesson require a class capable of intellectual discussions about sequential structure in discourse, about grammatical and syntactic units, and about what stories mean. The objectives presented here are aimed at the college level student.

1) A good beginning discussion could concern sequential structures and social values. The structure of the above story can be contrasted with a typical novel from Western civilization. The Western story, be it mystery, romance, or fairy tale, has a characteristic sequential structure that begins with setting and then moves into a plot. In this story about a women who gives birth to a child out of wedlock, detail after detail is revealed, until at the end, the father of Hester Prynne's publicly confesses his fatherhood. His confession

is the culmination toward which the entire drama has been moving. The Native story, in contrast, is held together more by visual imagery and a continuing cast of characters. The Native story does not necessarily build up to a climax; rather it consists of events that are connected through progressive changes. In one line, the story teller may be reporting past happenings, and, in the next, depicting something in the present tense directly to the listener. The sequential structure of a Native story reflects the values of the society. Non-progressive change contrasting with progress orientation has been seen by Bateson to depict Western United States non-Western value systems:

The idea of a society being climax oriented rather than being organized around non progressive change immediately comes to light in the way a story is written. If the story sets up a climax by withholding information from the reader at the start and then slowly builds to the essence of the thinking, then the story supports climax organization. That is not to say that there can be

no plan in the structure of an idea to make it clearly understood but only that the process of structuring it and designing the experience can be done with the idea of progressively changing the thinking without coming to a dramatic moment when everything is revealed in the course of a few sentences.
(Schlossberg, from About Bateson, p. 145)

ACTIVITY

The teacher can present the general ideas related to the objective, then the class can discuss how the lines of the story connect with each other.

For example, all of the lines in the story have something to do with the process of generating sparks from willow sticks, yet there is no steady progress to a conclusion. The story teller shifts from character identification of Y*-MON-TO-W*N-XU-YON, to an address to the listener, then makes a sudden shift to telling what the old man did. Students can discuss story structure and the story structure and the value system reflected. The

teacher can select lines and ask students to tell how a line is connected with other lines, and how it fits into the story as a whole. This test can be conducted orally.

2) A second area of discussion can concern the underlying syntax of the story. Sequential structures can be seen as underlying syntactic units. The notion of underlying syntax has been presented by Labor, in an analysis of oral narratives told by black adolescents in New York. Labor found that these stories could be analyzed according to what he termed Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Resolution, and Coda. Each of these underlying units gets the story across in a different way:

Abstract-summarizes the story.
Orientation-introduces characte characters, time and place.
Complicating Action-gives an account of a sequence of past events or actions.
Resolution-presents the final

action.
Coda-ends the story with a conventional, formulaic expression.

ACTIVITY

After discussing The Origin of Fire Story in terms of underlying syntax, the students can be asked to define a set of comprehension questions that reflect knowledge of underlying syntax.

Origin of Fire Comprehension Questions

1. Where in the story is the main character identified?

2. Where is what happened in this story presented?

3. Is there a final event at the end?

4. What type of unit does the story end with?

EVALUATION

Students can be asked to retell the story maintaining the underlying syntactic sequence. The teacher may wish to divide students into teams with one student in a team telling the story.

THE TEXT WAS TOLD BY ALICE PRATT TO RUTH BENNETT.